

# **Division of Public Health Using Technology to Help Physicians Fight Heart Disease And Lower Blood Pressure Among Delawareans**

DOVER – One in three Americans has high blood pressure, and 48 percent of those who have it do not have it under control. In fact, more than one-third of people with hypertension are unaware they even have the condition. In 2015, over 255,000 Delawareans age 18 or older, suffered from high blood pressure, one of the primary factors that lead people to develop heart disease. These are dangerous situations since persons with high blood pressure are four times more likely to die from stroke, and three times more likely to die from heart disease.

To battle this health crisis, the Division of Public Health and Quality Insights launched a project in 2016 to improve hypertension management for patients in 85 Delaware physician practices.

The initiative, which is supported by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), seeks to help participating physicians use their electronic health records (EHR) to report on the National Quality Forum (NQF) 0018 measure for hypertension. The NQF 0018 measure monitors the percentage of patients in a practice who had a diagnosis of hypertension and whose blood pressure was adequately controlled (less than 140/90: 120/80 is the ideal blood pressure reading but 140/90 is considered the earliest stage of hypertension and begins the risk for life-threatening complications).

"In my work with underserved communities, I frequently saw the serious impact that uncontrolled blood pressure has on patients' overall health," said Department of Health and Social Services Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker. "I'm very pleased that through our partnership with Quality Insights, we are able to offer these important tools to physicians to improve health and longevity."

"Hypertension is often called the silent killer, but it can be prevented and managed," said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "We're pleased to be able to use technological advances to help doctors and their patients better manage their hypertension and ultimately lead fuller, healthier lives." Heart disease and stroke are the second- and fourth-leading causes of death in Delaware, and excess weight, lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating and smoking contribute to thousands of heart attacks and strokes each year.

Quality Insights is providing each physician practice access to electronic educational modules, weekly news bulletins, and hands-on technical assistance. The educational modules highlight topics such as medication adherence, using care teams, and engaging patients in blood pressure self-management and monitoring. Each module includes access to tools and resources, such as patient reminders, apps, podcasts, patient videos and staff training videos.

According to Quality Insights project manager Andrea Rodi, one of the most promising areas of the project is a new home blood pressure monitor loaner program. To date, seven physician office sites are taking advantage of the service, which provides up to five home blood pressure monitors to each participating office, and a range of resources to help implement the program. Once a physician office has the loaner program up and running, Quality Insights staff makes monthly visits to check program compliance and address any issues identified by the physician offices. Blood pressure monitors are loaned to hypertensive patients who then report their

reading to their provider and other team care members who offers close support in helping them to lower their blood pressure.

“We’re really excited to offer this unique opportunity to Delaware physician offices,” Rodi said. “Blood pressure control is key to preventing or managing heart disease, and we’re glad to be making a difference.”

Providers interested in learning more about the Quality Insights program, should contact Ashley Biscardi at [Abiscard@qualityinsights.org](mailto:Abiscard@qualityinsights.org).

The Delaware Division of Public Health also offers free classes for people with high blood pressure. These classes help you to learn how to manage your blood pressure by reducing salt intake, being active, losing weight and much more. For more information on the classes or to register for these free classes, call 302-744-1020.

You can take action to prevent heart disease:

**Avoid tobacco and vaping** – Do not smoke or vape. Smokers who live in Delaware and are 18 years and older can get free help in quitting from the Delaware Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or [www.quitsupport.com](http://www.quitsupport.com).

**Be physically active** – Be physically active every day or at least 30 minutes three times a week. Teach your children how to be active.

**Manage weight and cholesterol** – The goal for waist size is less than 35 inches for women and less than 40 inches for men. (For Asians, the waist size goal is 32 inches for women and 35 inches for men.) Persons with higher waist sizes are at risk of diabetes, heart attack, or stroke and should visit their health care provider. Eat no-cholesterol or low-cholesterol foods. At least five fruits and vegetables each day is the way to go.

**Limit sodium and trans fat** – About 90 percent of Americans exceed the recommended sodium intake, says the CDC. The CDC recommends reducing sodium intake by 1,200 milligrams per day. The FDA recommends less than 2,300 mg.

**Control blood pressure** – An ideal blood pressure is less than 120/80.

Additional resources:

- Healthy lifestyles website:  
<https://www.healthydelaware.org/>
- Motivate the First State:  
<http://motivatethefirststate.com/>
- American Heart Association:  
<https://www.goredforwomen.org/know-your-numbers/>
- NIH:  
<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-communication-programs/ndep/living-with-diabetes/know-your-abcs/Pages/knowyourabcs.aspx>

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary*

*beverages.*